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ABSTRACT

The foreign language student must experience popular culture to fully comprehend the framework in which the foreign language functions. Traditional language learning, preoccupied with words, syntax, and pronunciation, has ignored this element, leaving students unprepared to interact with individuals in the target culture. Classroom activities to teach popular culture include: teacher explanation of a custom to the class; discussion of greetings, announcements of public events, popular advertising, invitations, and newspaper headlines; culture quizzes; introduction of songs reflecting popular culture; mini-debates; using analogy and contrast to examine cognates; and readings of popular commercials and magazines. A knowledge of the popular culture helps students from our monocultural society understand why people from another society may act differently. (MSE)

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TEACHING POPULAR CULTURE WITH A COMPUTER-ASSISTED INSTRUCTION (CAI) PROGRAM

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Because foreign language education rapidly changes to meet the needs of international communication, it is important that we reevaluate the ways in which popular culture is taught in the classroom. In the last years, much is been done to provide teachers and textbooks with culturally authentic material. The methodology, however, lags behind (Kramsch, p. 437).

In the past "formal culture" was sometimes included with the reading and interpreting of literature but "popular culture" was rarely incorporated into the foreign language curriculum. In recent years as language is redefined as an integral part of culture, not only have teachers had to obtain more than a mastery of the language, but they have also had to develop an understanding of the values and traditions of the persons who speak that language.

"Popular culture" signifies the behavioral patterns or lifestyles of a people. As Cornfield describes it "the culture of a people is the total way of life shared by everyone in the same speech community. It determines the individual's behavior and language. It consists of a persons's actions, reactions, gestures, manners of greeting; it influences what people eat and how they live; it shapes their attitudes and beliefs; and it sets a limit as to what someone can properly do or say" (Cornfield, p. 124).

The foreign language student must experience popular culture to fully comprehend the essential framework in which language functions. Students are many times "exposed" or "acquainted with another culture only passively, on a tourist level so to speak, while retaining their American perspective. Yet as long as we provide our students only with the facts of history or geography, economics or sociology, as long as we provide them only with a knowledge of the sophisticated structures of society, such as law and medicine, or examples and appreciative comments on artistic creations, such as poems, castles, or oil paintings, we have not yet provided them with an intimate view of where life's action is, where the individual and the social order come together, where self meets life" (Brooks, p. 212).

Understanding popular culture is one of the most important but least understood skills that an individual can acquire in the different phases of language acquisition. Considering the definition of culture -as a set of values and structure, the foreign language teacher is confronted with the need for more information about the teaching of culture.

Culture is defined as an entire set of values, presuppositions and structures that organize a society and that are expressed in the details of everyday life,

but culture is not the same as sociology, or literature or civilization, geography, history, folklore, or sociology culture never loses sight of the individual as it focuses upon the many social circumstances into which he must fit, upon the pattern of accommodation and the personal conform. What is important in culture is what one is expected to think, believe, say, do, eat, wear, pay, endure, resent, honor, laugh at, fight for, and worship in typical life situations.

Many of the textbooks and materials need to be updated on the area ofpopular culture. Genuine language documents should be obtained whenever possible. Such forms may be procured in person, during travels abroad, by written or by telephone request. When authentic documents are not available for classroom use, facsimiles may be substituted. Such facsimiles may either be prepared and duplicated ahead of time by the instructor, or prepared in class by students, thereby providing additional written practice in the target culture.

Traditional language learning, dominated by a pre-occupation with words, syntax, and pronunciation, has all but ignored popular culture. It is no wonder language students complain that they do not really learn to interact with other people. There are Americans with a superb

command of verbal Spanish fail utterly in their attempts to communicate with Spanish people. They simply do not understand some of the messages that reflect a great deal of the culture of a people.

Culture has been defined as "deep culture" which contains society's values, traits, customs and intercultural communication; and "formal culture" which is found in art, literature and music.

The following are some activities to teach popular culture:

1. Explanation of a custom to your class, define a word (for example, "quinceañera").

2. Discussion of greetings, announcements of public events, popular advertising, invitations, and newspaper headlines.

3. Give a culture quiz (see our five evaluating statements about popular culture).

4. Songs which reflect "popular culture" can be introduced.

All of these activities help define and express the attitudes of a culture. Other useful cultural activities include:

1. Mini-debates (e.g., the role of men in the Spanish-

speaking world).

2. Cultural connotations: analogy and contrast (e.g., "santo" and birthday. In Mexico word "tradicional" implies something or someone Mexican, and the word "moderno" conveys something American or foreign).

3. Readings of popular Hispanic commercials and magazines

The development of cultural insight enables the student not only to function in the target culture being studied, but also help him to respond and understand with greater emphathy to individuals of different nationalities.

The activities recommended are some that encourage the student to see culture from the inside and to respect the viewpoint of an individual within that culture. Studying a culture from this vantage point enables the learner to approach a foreign culture with understanding and sensitivity, it makes him aware of the uniqueness of what it means to be a Mexican, an Argentine, or a Spaniard (Hammers, p. 53).

From these activities it becomes clear that a knowledge of the popular culture is important to understand why people from another society may act differently. By analyzing and accepting another culture on its own terms, students will begin to develop the insight necessary to discover that

their own culture is only one among many in the world, that each culture has its own value and that no culture can serve as the norm for any other (Nostrand, p. 174).

Most of our students live in a monocultural environment and we as teachers know that these individuals sometimes tend to make premature value judgments. Many students from this monocultural background react with a certain intolerance to the culture of others, and that is why today more than ever,in trade and diplomacy, we must listen, negotiate, persuade--and that means meeting other persons in their own language, literally as well as figuratively. We consequently need knowledge not only of the words they use but also of the values and beliefs that shape their lives. (Brooks)

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CULTURE QUIZ

(EVALUATING STATEMENTS ABOUT THE CULTURE)

True or false:

___1. Cuban and Puerto Rican cuisine are very "spicy".

___2. The "tango" is the national music of Argentina.

__3. Most young Spanish-speaking people like to go out in groups or with other couples.

__4. In a typical Mexican meal, tortilla chips and dips are served.

__5. Indian culture is predominant in the Caribbean.

FIESTAS Y DIAS CONMEMORATIVOS

ENERO	1	Año Nuevo
	6	Epifanía o Día de los Reyes Magos
FEBRERO	27	Día de Independencia (Rep. Dominicana)
MARZO-ABRIL		Carnaval
MAYO	1	Día del Obrero, Día del Trabajo
	5	Cinco de mayo (México)
	20	Día de Independencia (Cuba)
	24	Batalla de Pichincha (Ecuador)
	25	Fiesta Patria (Argentina)
JUNIO	24	Día de San Juan (Puerto Rico)
		Día del Ejercito (Venezuela)
	25	Día de San Pedro (Chile)
JULIO	5	Día de Independencia (Venezuela)
	9	Día de Independencia (Argentina)
	20	Día de Independencia (Colombia)
	24	Nacimiento de Simón Bolívar (Bolivia, Colombia y Venezuela)
	28	Fiesta Patria (Perú)
AGOSTO	6	Día de Independencia (Bolivia)
	10	Día de Independencia (Ecuador)
	15	Día de la Asunción
	25	Día de Independecia (Uruguay)
	30	Fiesta de Santa Rosa de Lima (Perú)
SEPTIEMBRE	15	Día de Independencia (Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras y Nicaragua)
	16	Día de Independencia (México)
	18	Día de Independencia (Chile)
OCTUBRE	12	Día de la Raza (Descubrimiento de América por Colón)
NOVIEMBRE	1	Día de todos los santos
	2	Día de difuntos
	3	Día de Independencia (Panama)
DICIEMBRE	7	Día de Luto Nacional (Cuba)
	12	Fiesta de la Virgen de Guadalupe (México)
	16-24	Posadas de Navidad (México)
	24	Nochebuena
	25	Navidad
	28	Día de los Santos Inocentes (día de bromas y chistes)
	31	Nochevieja

I. FECHAS Y FIESTAS IMPORTANTES

COMBINAR: (Seleccionar la letra apropiada)

__1. el Día de los Reyes	a. Semana Santa
__2. Nochevieja	b. fiesta nacional
__3. Nochebuena	c. el seis de enero
__4. Día de la Independencia	d. el 24 de diciembre
__5. Cuaresma	e. el último día del año

COMPLETAR:

1. El Día del Obrero es _____.
2. El Carnaval es _____.
3. Una fiesta patria es _____.
4. El patrón o la patrona de un país o pueblo es _____.

II. ESTRUCTURAS SOCIALES

CIERTO O FALSO (Escriba C o F)

__1. La clase baja a veces se le llama "humilde".

__2. Una persona de una familia acomodada es pobre.

__3. Un obrero humilde pertenece a la clase media.

__4. Un alto ejecutivo usualmente es de la clase alta.

II. COSTUMBRES

SELECCIONAR: (Seleccionar la letra apropiada)

__1. La fiesta de "quinceañera" es similar en los Estados Unidos a

a. una boda.
b. la presentación en la sociedad.
c. un velorio.

__2. En los países hispanos se celebra el santo más que

a. la Navidad.
b. el cumpleaños.
c. las fiestas.

__3. En la escuela Lationamericana cuando llega el maestro los estudiantes

a. se ponen de pie.
b. piden la bendición.
c. se callan.

__4. El machismo es un fenómeno

a. social
b. geográfico
c. psicológico

COMPLETAR (Seleccionar la palabra adecuada)

fallecer pesame tapar esquela novenario

1. Al entrar a un velorio, casi siempre se da un beso o un apretón de manos y se dice "Ud tiene mi más sentido _____

2. En el velorio la familia a veces prefiere _____ el ataúd, o cubrir el cadáver.

3. Cuando una persona se muere, la familia anuncia la triste ocasión con _____ de defunción.

4. La familia ora nueve días en un _____.

5. Los periódicos y las esquela frecuentemente evitan la palabra morir y usan "desaparecer" o _____.

IV. GESTOS

CIERTO O FALSO (Escriba C o F)

__1. El niño hispano debe mantener los ojos bajos cuando habla.

__2. En la cultura hispana uno debe tener ambas manos a la vista cuando come.

__3. La mayoría de las personas usan poco la mímica.

__4. Los hispanos se acercan más cuando converssan que los norteamericanos.